



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
Patent and Trademark Office**

ASSISTANT SECRETARY AND COMMISSIONER  
OF PATENTS AND TRADEMARKS  
Washington, D.C. 20231

#

December 23, 1999

Mr. Charles L. Gholz  
Oblon, Spivak, McClelland,  
Maier & Neustadt, P.C.  
Fourth Floor  
1755 Jefferson Davis Highway  
Arlington, Virginia 22202

Dear Mr. Charles L. Gholz:

This letter is in response to your most recent status inquiry concerning Application Serial Number 08/420,503.

As requested by Applicant, the possibility of an interference with Patent Number 5,435,308 is being investigated. An issue has arisen regarding the payment of the maintenance fees in the patent. This issue must be resolved before the interference can be formally declared.

I have been informed by the examiner that he has been in close contact with Mr. Rick Neifeld of Oblon, Spivak, McClelland Maier and Neustadt and that Mr. Neifeld is aware of the circumstances of this application. As soon as the issue concerning payment of the maintenance fees for the patent is resolved, the examiner will take up the case for the appropriate action.

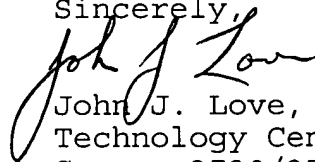
For your records it is noted that this application is assigned to Art Unit 3736. Group Art Unit 3311 was abolished when the Patent Corps reorganized into Technology Centers in 1998.

Charles L. Gholz  
Serial No. 08/420,503  
December 23, 1999

Page 2

I apologize for the failure of the Office to respond in writing to your previous status inquiries. If you have any questions concerning this letter or the progress of the application you can call the undersigned at the number provided below.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John J. Love".

John J. Love, Director  
Technology Center 3700  
Groups 3730/3760  
Mechanical Engineering, Manufacturing  
and Products (703) 308-0873